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A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

New York State Agricultural Society

AT ITS

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL FAIR

HELD AT

WATERTOWN, OCTOBER 3d, 1856.

BY HON. WILLIAM JESSUP,
OF MONTROSE, PENN.

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A D D R E S S.

MR. PRESIDENT, AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE
NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY:

In compliance with the invitation of your committee, I appear before you to pronounce your annual address.

Looking at the distinguished character and pre-eminent abilities of those who in several successive years have preceded me in the discharge of this duty, and the high character of their addresses, the broad scope and full discussion they have given to most topics seemingly proper for such occasions, it might well become so humble an individual to decline this honor. But my apology must be found in my love and veneration for the great cause of Agriculture, and a desire to add my poor mite to its onward progress and steady advancement.

In this desire I bring a few suggestions which may serve to fill that space, in your interesting exercises usually allotted to this object.

For a little more than a century our national progress has been so rapid, as to leave us and those

who preceded us, no stopping place, no apparent quiet and calm, in which there could be a gathering up of the rich profusions which have surrounded us; and a consolidation, so to speak, of the elements which constitute our greatness.—They all lie strewn along our pathway—scattered everywhere—and in the disarranged and disordered state in which we pass by them in our rapid progress, most truly and fully bear their testimony to our national greatness.

We are yet in a giant infancy—our institutions are shaped and molded by influences which have never seen a parallel in the History of Earth. Far removed by the wide intervention of the Atlantic from the corrupt and corrupting influences of the Old World, we have been enabled to discard many of their maxims, and to adopt a course of policy, civil and political, tending essentially to equality. We have discarded the laws of primo geniture, so that few estates can largely accumulate, and as matter of fact, most large estates are divided and partitioned in the second or third generation.

We have abolished all aristocratic titles and orders, and opened all the honors that can be conferred by the government, to a fair competition of all the people. We boast that one American citizen stands upon the same platform with every other. We invite all and of every land and of every clime, to come and participate with us in the blessings of liberty and equality. We welcome them to our shores, and offer them protection and a home.

In this our nation's youth, we afford an asylum for the oppressed, a refuge from tyranny, and more than all, a sure reward for industry and frugality. Our arms are open to receive honest labor come from whatever place it may.

A retrospect of the brief years since our fathers landed on this

“Rock bound coast,”

fills the mind with wonder. That which has been accomplished, seems, as we look back upon it, “as a dream when one awaketh.”

Where are the mighty forests which so recently covered the largest and fairest portions of your great state?

Where are those trees which in all their primitive grandeur spread their branches in an unbroken shade from the Hudson to Lake Erie?

They are gone—the ceaseless hands of industry have shorn them of their ever-green mantle, their timbers, wrought into the ground-work of a world-wide commerce, bear proudly to the breeze the flags of every nation. The desolate moan of the forest pine has given way to the lowing of cattle and the busy hum of mechanical and agricultural labor. Cities and villages and fertile fields occupy their places, and industry in its varied forms of interest and enjoyment diffuses happiness through millions of hearts.

Were these forests in their majestic silence grand? Is this civilization which sheds its hallowed influence over this, so late a wilderness,

grand? Is this magic touch which has in such brief space, called into existence your cities and towns, and canals, and railroads, and filled all with plenty for their thronging millions—is this grand?

How much grander then, is the contemplation of that *Free Labor* which has produced them all! that well requited and paid industry, without which none of these things *had been*, or *being*, had been a blot and a stain upon them all.

The moral grandeur and dignity of agricultural labor is in part my theme.

I refer not here to those labor-saving machines which so well subserve the cause of agriculture, and give character and honor to our age. They claim a meed of praise on every suitable occasion. Their influence is everywhere felt and acknowledged. They are rapidly hastening us along in the road to national wealth, and promise to make us the *granary of the world*.

But they did not fell the forests—they did not roll the logs; the wilderness could only be assailed single handed, and nothing but the axe and firebrand of the pioneer was adequate to its destruction.

Who has not seen him, as solitary, in his own self-reliance, he walks into the heart of the forest, builds his bark cabin, far removed from roads, from neighbors, from all the comforts and refinements of life, from social privileges and enjoyments, and there, axe in hand, commencing his attacks upon that forest in expectation of making it “to bud and blossom as the rose.”

Who that has considered the labor and toil, the self-denial and perseverance necessary to subdue that forest, has not given "the honor to valor due"—to that pioneer of civilization?

And who, when after a few years have passed, has seen in place of that forest, the broad fields of luxuriant harvests, the cities, the churches, the luxuries of life, the dense and teeming population, the canals, the railroads, and all the appliances of the civilization of the nineteenth century, has not bowed in homage to the dignity of human labor.

The individual man who wields the axe and fire-brand, clearing the way for all of health and happiness which follow in his train, is the pioneer hero of agricultural labor, and whenever seen is worthy of high regard for his work's sake.

So too all that great class of men, who, leaving the comforts of home, go forth as explorers and settlers in new fields, whether of forest or of prairie, are worthy of regard and respect. They are men who enlarge and extend the boundaries of human effort, and make homes for themselves and others, where but for their labor all would be unbroken wilderness.

Thus we view *agricultural labor* in its individual character and influence, as *honorable* and *dignified*; and without regard to the personal condition of the laborer, claim for it the respect always due to meritorious and successful enterprise. But there are other considerations which still more tend to enhance our estimate of the importance of agricultural labor.

And first, The numbers engaged therein, their character, standing and influence.

By the census of 1850, of 880,000 males nearly one half are farmers by their profession, or engaged in pursuits directly connected with Agriculture. This state is a fair representative of all the Free States, some having a larger and some a smaller proportion of farmers.

This great disproportion of the engagements of the male population in favor of Agriculture, gives at once the true estimate which is, and of right ought to be placed upon this species of labor. Its interest is greatly enhanced by the consideration, also, of its great value, surpassing all others in incalculable ratios, lying at the foundation of all other enterprises, and being the basis of all the wealth of the world.

To serve its interests we have drawn from the millions of Europe, and filled our land with canals and railroads—these monuments of the real greatness of the first half of the nineteenth century. We have covered our rivers, seas and oceans with ships, and in a word, every enterprise of man rests upon Agriculture as its sure basis.

I only repeat what is universally conceded, and in the concession of which no invidious comparison is intended—that the farmers of the country, as a body, greatly excel any other class, in the exercise of all those virtues which adorn and elevate man. No more pleasant picture can be presented to the mind, than is every day to be seen in our rural districts.

I have in mind such a view upon one of the slopes which bounds a beautiful lake in your state—farms of about one hundred acres—an area of about five miles square—near the center, the church, the mechanic shops, the house kept for the public hospitality, the neat school house, and a few stores constitute the village. The roads are well constructed. The farms are in a high state of cultivation, and all the scene at once gives evidence of honest and well rewarded industry, of high moral worth, and of the dignity of agricultural labor.

These scenes are everywhere to be found. The beautiful valleys of Pennsylvania present the same delightful vision; and both only compete with the fertile plains of Ohio and the west, and the more rough, but more highly cultivated fields of the north and east.

Mr. President—We can not fix too high a value upon *personal labor*, nor study too much to elevate it. It is not aspersed except by inference, but *some inferences* in our day have such a tendency to degrade personal labor that they need to be resisted.

I never can consent that the non-producing class shall claim in any respect a superiority over those who rise in the morning of every day to daily toil, “who work, laboring with their own hands”—and these give to every other class support and sustenance. “The laborer is worthy of his hire,” and in this country whose civil, political and social institutions are based upon principles of equality, of regard to the just rights of all, it becomes public duty that he be not only rewarded for that labor,

but that he receive all that consideration, to which his most meritorious avocation shall entitle him. By what process shall labor be saved in the estimation of the world from a degree of obloquy which is sometimes attempted to be fastened upon it!

There is a supposed elevation of the man who lives without labor, over him who toils; as a consequence many of our young men flee from the farm to the counter, and to the profession, and too frequently fail of success.

Had they been contented in their fathers' most honorable vocation, certain success would have attended their efforts, and they have lived an honored and useful life. False notion suppon the subject of the true elevation of farm labor destroyed them. Such cases are to be found everywhere, and the evil in some sort needs a remedy. Such remedy in part is to be found *here*, in *this circle*, at this fair. The tendency of every thing here is to bring out in prominence this grand feature of all our arguments in favor of personal labor—to give it a *distinct* prominence.

This great gathering of the farmers of this great State in itself dignifies and elevates the labor of which it is but the exponent. The county societies, in their fairs, their discussions, and their addresses tend to the same point. It is most gratifying to know that the influence of these associations has uniformly had this tendency, and that a great change in this particular is clearly discernable, where these means have been success-

fully applied. The notion, that agricultural pursuits were not suited to mental acquirements—that an educated farmer, was likely to be an unsuccessful one, and that if a man knew how to hold his plough and reap his grain, he had all that knowledge which a farmer need to have, is already exploded. The associations of farmers, multiplied as they are in all parts of the land, have done much, very much to correct this false view, and to give in its place the conviction *that farmers of right ought to be and must be educated.* When this principle shall be fully carried out, we shall have the dignity of farm labor truly vindicated.

This question thus necessarily runs into the subject not only of education in our common and higher schools, but of introducing into these schools many of the simple elements of agricultural science, making them, for the sons and daughters of our farmers, the preparatory schools for those higher institutions now being established in many of the states, and which must find, at no remote period, a support in every Free State. Having already adverted to the great preponderance of the agricultural class in numbers, it necessarily follows that in all rural districts, the schools are filled with those who are to be engaged in the same business for their lives. There is a large field for agricultural science which may be cultivated to advantage in the common schools. Many text books are at hand, and the farmers of the country have but to make the demand in earnest, and teachers qualified to impart instruction in the

science of agriculture will be found to fill up that demand. By this means interest will be given to every department of education, and while the mind is impressible and open to right convictions, it will be filled with useful knowledge and with correct views of the farmer's life and avocation, or, as it may very properly be styled, "*The Profession of Agriculture.*"

Nor can the education of the farmer be limited by any such bounds as these. As a class they are reaching far beyond this, and are already demanding a more perfect and enlarged system of education. They press upon the public attention their claims to an elevated and expanded system. They demand the erection and endowment of the farmer's high school—and will continue to demand it until the object is attained,—and until all which art and skill, inventive genius and science can impart, shall be concentrated in such schools, and thus made accessible to the young men of all parts of the land. Nor are these schools to be the resort of those alone who expect to be directors of the labor of others, and managers of large estates. The prevalence of such a sentiment would work their ruin. They are to educate the men who are to hold the plow in their own fields, and to give to working farmers all the intelligence, knowledge and science which are requisite, not only to the proper direction of all farming operations, but if need be, to direct and guide the affairs of state, when, by the call of their country, that duty shall be laid upon them.

Mr. President—Political discussions can not be introduced here, but I shall not trench upon forbidden ground when I affirm, that farmers have not been sufficiently numerous in the councils of the state or nation.

We need more of their sound minds and matured judgments and calm conservatism in our public councils. They are the hope and reliance of the nation in all times of trial, and in all great exigencies.

And are they to receive all the needed qualifications in their own sphere, for the discharge of their high duties? I am sure, Mr. President, that this society has but an affirmative response to give to this inquiry.

The higher grades of instruction must necessarily be provided, not in stinted, and measured, and in few and poorly endowed schools—they must bear some proportion to the number, character and wealth of those for whom they are designed.—They must sustain and elevate the character of the class for whose benefit they are provided. If we take any pattern from the training in other seminaries, we shall have an enlarged system of education for the mind and for the body. We shall cultivate both together, and having all the appliances for that cultivation, we shall expect them to produce their desired results. It will be in vain to look for the accomplishment of this object from ordinary operations in similar cases.

The aid of the state is to be invoked, and all that is necessary to give permanence and efficiency to

the institution should be provided from the public treasury.

The laboring classes sustain all others. The fruit of their toil is the wealth of the nation. Our commerce—our manufactories, are equally dependent upon them.

They may truly be termed the life blood of the nation. Is the vital fluid in a healthy condition—the whole body is full of life. Is it corrupted—the whole body is covered with ulcers and ready for decay. Can that which is thus vital be degraded, and yet the interests dependent thereon not be affected? It is impossible!

The future of our nation, it is difficult to predict. There are from time to time complications in the body politic, which for the moment seem threatening, but they disappear with the occasion which gave them birth. And so must it be while the masses of our farmers are well instructed, not only in their pure, elevating and noble profession, but in all their duties as American citizens.

May I be permitted to congratulate this society upon their progress and success in the establishment of their Agricultural College—upon its location in one of those fairy spots of which there are so many in this state, and upon the prospects opening before them for its usefulness, and may I be permitted to suggest that it will for a long time require fostering support, and a generous and liberal patronage. These, I doubt not, it will receive, and that its blessings will be largely felt and fully appreciated by the citizens of this great state.

It is gratifying to me also to state, that Pennsylvania intends to compete with New York for the honor of the best endowed and most beneficial farmer's school.

She too is advancing rapidly in her preparation for giving dignity and honor to farm labor. With these two great states going side by side in this noble work, what may not be hoped for ? In vain will the influences which tend to degrade labor attempt to pass these boundaries.

This "*Cordon Sanitaire*" can not be passed by any feeling, which, degrading labor, necessarily degrades man. I have confined this view of the subject to farm labor, but it is not necessarily thus confined.

The system of education adapted to farmers, will with little exception, be adapted to the wants of mechanics and artisans.

The practical in education will form the basis. That which instructs in arts and in *science* in its most extended sense, will necessarily be furnished, and the artisan equally with the farmer needs that education.

I am no advocate for making the work-shop a college, and of apprenticing in that college, those who are to be the practical handicrafts-men of our country, but it would be rank injustice to exclude them from that education, which a liberal government should provide equally for all

The avenue should be opened broad and wide, and then all who choose may enter.

I have already suggested that farmers ought to be more frequently in our national and state councils, and yet their habitual diffidence, their love of home, and their aversion to political life, are very likely to keep them in retirement. But at home they hold the control of the government, and they have only to draw their check on the public treasury and it would not be protested.

If your college needs a hundred thousand dollars to begin with, your farmers have but to order the money appropriated and it will be found. Let your society and the county societies but once earnestly take the matter in hand, and it will easily be accomplished.

To whom do your state funds belong? Who pay your taxes? Who are the most numerous class in your state? And I may enquire, who have been the last to be served in their great interests from the public treasury?

The response is at once at hand. And will this state of things continue. Farmers must answer NO!

Mr. President, the problem in self-government which this nation is now working out, is not yet entirely solved. We have, in comparison with other nations of the earth, barely entered upon our existence; and although we were strong at our birth, and our early youth gives evidence of great power and vigor; yet looking with a proper sense of the instruction to be derived from the history of other nations, we can write no future for ourselves, our course is, to a great extent, untried; we came

into existence upon great principles, and we must stand and be built *up* upon such principles, or we must fall; we rely upon the patriotic intelligence of the masses. The laboring classes do, and ever must form these masses. To give them a clear and intelligent view of their rights, of their privileges and immunities is to give permanence and stability to our institutions, and to prepare us for a perpetuity of those rights, which shall be a blessing to all "the dwellers on earth."

I shall in this connection be pardoned for saying, that any systems of government which disparages the producing classes, must in the end be bad government. It will necessarily contain elements of corruption and dissolution. I need not go farther on this point than thus to state the question, for I am sure of a hearty response to the position that for this nation, the true policy of patriotism is to create and multiply intelligent, well educated laborers.

I have adverted to the influence exerted by the fairs of this and kindred societies, but I have not referred to the greatest and most effectual instrument for elevating labor which is now, or hereafter can be called into operation.

Our *agricultural newspapers* and *magazines* reach numbers and produce effects which are unequaled. Their literary character is alike creditable to their conductors and to the farmers by whom they are read. The great benefits flowing from their extended circulation, is not confined to the improvements in agriculture, which are a sure con-

comitant of their perusal. They create and inspire a taste for reading, enlarge the sphere of observation, and educate in literature and science a large class who are inaccessible to other influences. They have already taken a high place among the scientific and literary periodicals of the day, and may very favorably challenge a comparison with them. They are worthy of most extended patronage. Their evident effect is to elevate the character of labor.

Whoever passes through the agricultural portions of the Eastern and Middle States will be struck with the equal distribution of property.

Few large estates can be found—comparatively few farms rented. Most farms are worked by their owners, and the mass of those owners are the educated farmers of the country. Some agricultural paper is to be found in almost every house. Its appearance is welcomed as weekly, or monthly, it is delivered.

A sense of degradation in labor finds none of its humiliating accompaniments where the well-conducted farm journal is regularly perused. The demand for a Quarterly Agricultural Review of the high order of the best scientific and literary reviews of this country and Europe, may not be a pressing necessity at this moment; but may we not expect such a periodical as soon as our colleges are founded, our professorships filled and endowed.

There is certainly a field to be occupied by such a periodical, not in place of any we now have, not excluding one of our farm journals, nor in any way

interfering with their circulation; but occupying a higher sphere, and increasing the influence and beneficial effects of all.

Mr. President—I doubt not that our agricultural journals have added millions to our national wealth; and at the same time they have been productive of happiness and enjoyment in the farmer's family, giving contentment to his sons and daughters, and a relish for labor which is beyond all price.

Concluding this somewhat desultory address, I may be permitted briefly to allude to the agricultural interests of our nation, as connected with the administrative portion of the government. Our National Society is a noble institution, doing a vast work, bringing into happy juxtaposition, the varied interests of the nation.

And without in detail pointing out its prospects for good to the whole nation, as your society is blessing the state, I wish to commend its approaching exhibition of next week, at Philadelphia, as worthy the patronage of all. But what place has the great agricultural interests of the nation in the government? Transcending all other interests, furnishing a vast majority of all our exports, giving character and influence to our commerce, we have a trifling yearly appropriation for the purchase of seeds, &c., and an insignificant place in a subordinate division of one of our departments.

A department of agriculture, with a vigilant head, whose whole duties are devoted to a consideration of this subject, is demanded alike by

the magnitude of the pecuniary interests involved, and the number of those employed in the prosecutions of those interests.

There are a variety of legislative enactments which need constantly this supervision, and in the details of which there should be constant reference to facts which ought to be collated and prepared for use in such department.

Scarce a treaty of commerce is made in which agricultural interests are not involved, and for the want of such accurate and careful knowledge as can only be acquired by continual research and study, those interests it is believed in some cases have been sacrificed, and in others have not been so advanced as they might have been. I would not be understood as disparaging in the least, the work which has been done through the Patent Office for the introduction of choice seeds and plants, and the collecting and diffusing of varied and important experience and knowledge. I appreciate it most fully and in common with my brother farmers, am grateful for it.

But what is the influence of American Agriculture upon the commerce of the world? Where can a better provision be made for its extension? What reciprocity treaties can be made with other nations opening a market for our surplus? What present restrictions can be removed or compensated for by removing similar restrictions from the products of the country imposing them?

These are questions only to be answered by a mind devoted to this one subject at home and

abroad, and which will have the responsibility of these great interests laid upon it. A voice in the treaty making power is demanded by larger considerations than I have suggested. It may be alleged that all departments of the government are interested in this great subject, and that being regarded as the most important of all the subjects of legislation and protection, it is always cared for. I only answer that the old maxim is applicable in its full force, "that what is every body's business is nobody's business."

It will be vain to object that it will increase the expenses of the government, or, that it will complicate the administration and add to the numbers of the cabinet. The farmers furnish the money, and instead of complicating and confusing, it will relieve the department of the interior, still leaving in that department enough to occupy the mind and employ the energies of any ordinary man. No valid objection can be urged against the establishment of such a department, and it is only necessary that the united voices of our farmers shall be heard in Washington to produce this very important end. Some time since, when this subject was discussed at a meeting of the National Society, it was objected that the department of Agriculture would necessarily be filled by a *politician*, as were the other branches of government, and that the interests of agriculture would thereby greatly suffer. This objection was urged by an influential senator, but although the source of the objection was high, the

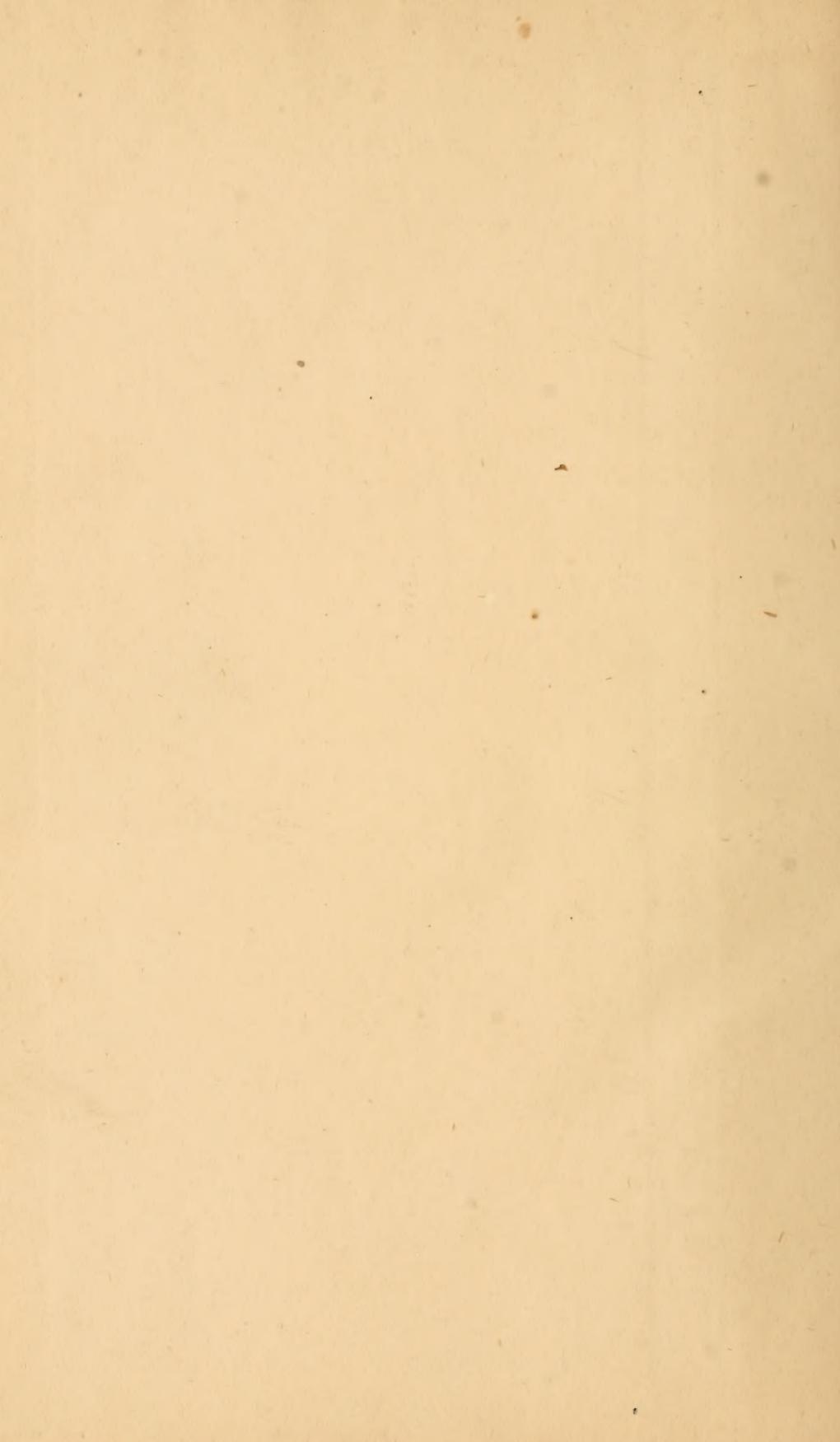
objection itself has no validity. In all the parties into which the country has ever been divided, there have been found well-qualified, patriotic men, who would command the confidence of the community, and who would devote to the objects of their office, all the requisite talent, industry and skill, and it is not true, that because they might belong to one or another party, they would fail in fidelity to the duties required of them.

With agricultural contributions to the wealth of nations of more than fifteen hundred millions of dollars per year, the interests of which blend with every other interest of the world, it is not asking too much, to demand a department of agriculture, as an obligation of government, as a right the granting of which is not longer to be deferred.

Mr. President and Gentlemen—The cause of agricultural labor is the cause of our common humanity. The onward progress of civilization, of arts, of science, and of all that elevates and adorns society, essentially depends upon its character and the estimate in which it is held. In all the Free States, it sends its contributions of members and influence to every avocation and profession. It claims support. It demands honor. It is to be protected and defended against all assaults, either from an aristocratic pride and feeling at home, or from degrading servile influences from abroad. Its fruits of industry require the protecting, fostering and expanding care of the government. Its hardy youth demand all those appliances of education

which shall amply qualify them for fulfilling their duties as farmers and carrying out their obligations as American citizens—and our mission—the mission of this and affiliated societies, will not be ended until these objects are accomplished.





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